

Guerrilla Music Marketing Handbook

by Bob Baker

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Introduction

Welcome to a new way of promoting your music. For decades, aspiring musicians thought the only legitimate route to success was landing a recording contract with a major record label. The times have definitely changed. The Internet and low-cost recording technologies have created a huge do-it-yourself music movement. Unfortunately, thousands of aspiring songwriters and band members still believe the road to widespread recognition can only be traveled through a record deal.

I believe the best way to approach a career as a musician who writes and performs original music is to take control, get your hands dirty and market your music yourself. No one feels as strongly about your craft as you do. Which means you're the best person in the world to spread the news.

Sure, promoting your own music takes lots of effort. But it's well worth it. And it can be profitable. Here are just a few examples of music people who have succeeded on their own terms:

- It took her more than four years and several hundred live shows to do it, but singer/songwriter April Nash (www.aprilmash.com) sold over 60,000 copies of her self-released CD.
- John Taglieri, a solo singer/songwriter from New Jersey (featured in Chapter 5), sold more than 2,000 of his own CDs primarily using the Internet.
- Working alone from his house in West Virginia, Scooter Scudieri (www.scudieri.com) sold 1,500 copies of his CD in six months, which led to an appearance on NPR's Mountain Stage radio show and an opening slot for Dave Matthews and NRBQ.
- Mikel Fair and his electronic music project 303infinity (www.mp3.com/303infinity) have earned about \$200,000 through merchandise

sales and performance royalties. Fair has a loyal fan base and a mailing list of thousands.

- Instead of shooting for a record deal, singer/songwriter Ellis Paul decided to concentrate on songwriting, getting in front of people and building a buzz. His first two independently released CDs sold more than 25,000 copies combined. Rounder/Philo Records later re-released one of his CDs.
- After working for more than a decade in the corporate world, Scarlett left her job to pursue a full-time career in the music industry. Today she runs her own booking agency, publishing company and record label, and is building an international career with her band, the Scarlett Blues Band.

Doing it yourself is the righteous way

You've most likely heard of singer/songwriter Ani DiFranco. Over a seven-year period she sold more than 400,000 copies of her many independent releases (that's an average of 66,600 units per year). In one year alone, DiFranco performed 130 shows and generated almost \$2 million in gross ticket sales. She's been written about in glowing terms by just about every major magazine and newspaper in the country.

The astounding thing is, DiFranco accomplished all of this without a major record label, commercial radio airplay, MTV exposure or advertising. "If you are disgustingly sincere and terribly diligent, there are ways for any serious artist to operate outside the corporate structure," she once told the *Los Angeles Times*.

At age 20, DiFranco started her own label, Righteous Babe Records, and began performing a growing number of solo acoustic shows. Coffeehouse gigs led to colleges, then larger theaters and major folk festivals. DiFranco now has more than 30,000 people on her mailing list (with more signing on every show) and seven employees that handle CD and merchandise orders from a 1,000-square-foot warehouse in Buffalo, NY.

"My problem with the guys who run the music industry is that their only priority is to make money," she adds. "My priority is to make music. The fact is, they need artists more than the artists need them."

So the next time you get down in the dumps because that major label recording contract hasn't come your way yet, pause and realize that – like DiFranco and other self-supporting musicians – you may be better off as an independent artist.

And don't think that the examples I use here are rare, isolated cases. Granted, most indie acts don't reach such impressive levels. But there are thousands of songwriters, musicians and bands turning a decent profit. And they're doing it on their own terms – doing something they have a real passion for: making and sharing music.

Putting your music career in focus

This manual was written to help you along the confusing path that leads to success with your music. The concepts, ideas and suggestions in these pages are simple. That's not to say they're always easy. There's work to be done here, but it's the kind of activity that's well within your ability to pull off.

The problem with most independent music people, even the ones who take lots of action, is that their energy is wasted on the wrong things or by taking an unproductive approach. By the time you finish reading and working with this manual, you'll have a much clearer idea of how to direct your energies.

There are a couple of essential attitudes that run throughout this manual. They are:

- 1) **Whenever you take action to promote your music, you must know exactly what your purpose is and why you're taking the action to begin with.** The way to make sure you're going about things effectively is to come up with a plan that makes sense, have very focused goals and realize that you need to provide a benefit (or solution) to everyone you connect with in the music business.
- 2) **Think outside of your mental box.** Human beings are creatures of habit. We become victims of our own routines. Therefore, it's no surprise that we slip into a narrow way of doing things. Habits are quite useful when they involve brushing your teeth, getting dressed and driving a car. But when it comes to promoting your music, this routine way of thinking – and acting – is stunting your progress. When you market yourself the same way you've always done it, or the same way a thousand other artists have done it, you become part of the great indie music swamp in which everyone looks and sounds the same.

The guerrilla music marketing challenge

In this manual, I'll poke and prod you to be different, to expand your thinking, to focus your goals and actions – in essence, to become a true Guerrilla Music Marketer. We won't be talking about national advertising campaigns, music videos on MTV or worldwide distribution. Among other things, the following pages will show you how to:

- Work from the trenches, with little or no money.
- Use often-overlooked techniques to give your music wider exposure.
- Build a following one fan at a time.
- Use each small success as a stepping stone to a bigger and more significant success story.

I'm also going to ask you to do some serious soul searching and then commit your thoughts to paper by filling out the two Activity Worksheet sections. On these pages I've taken the main points covered throughout the manual and given you space to put your own responses. I implore you to use these worksheets! For it is here where my

random suggestions come to life and become your own. By writing in this section, you'll get a clearer idea of where you are and in what direction you need to be heading.

Guerrilla techniques in action

It was using these same guerrilla tactics and capturing my thoughts and goals on paper that led me to start playing music when I was 15 (the year was 1975, for those of you keeping score). In the 1980s I played the club circuit throughout the Midwest and later played in bands that each put out independent releases. (I still play in a band part-time. I'm a singer/guitarist/songwriter, if you must know.)

I used many of the very ideas presented in this manual to launch my own local music magazine in 1987. I didn't have any money (to speak of) and no connections or experience with publishing. All I had was a good concept and a knack for writing. That newspaper, called *Spotlight*, grew and flourished for 10 years until I ceased publication in 1997. (I put the paper to rest so I could concentrate my efforts on writing and marketing resources like this one.)

In 1993, I had my first book published, called *101 Ways to Make Money in the Music Business*. Later that year I founded the St. Louis Regional Music Showcase, an annual music conference that ran for five years in the Midwest.

More recently, I've established an online presence as an indie music marketing coach through my www.TheBuzzFactor.com site. At last count, my *The Buzz Factor* e-zine was about to surpass 5,000 subscribers. And in 2001, Top Floor Publishing released a new book of mine, called *Poor Richard's Branding Yourself Online: How to Use the Internet to Become a Celebrity or Expert in Your Field*.

The thing is, I wasn't born into a wealthy family. I don't have friends who wield great power, nor do I have any special abilities. I'm certainly not a super salesman and I don't have a Type-A, high-achiever personality.

But I realized early on that I had a mind, just like everyone else's, that was capable of making great things happen. The only thing was, it seemed so many people around me felt as if they were victims of circumstance; that life handed them their fate and they were just along for the ride. That wasn't good enough for me. Through reading books and pondering about life for a while, I came to the conclusion that our lives are simply a reflection of our thoughts. There's a great quote that goes something like: "We become what we think about most of the time."

The secret to musical success

The problem with people living dead-end lives is that they think dead-end thoughts. People who enjoy successful lives think successful thoughts – and then follow those thoughts with positive action.

Once I realized this simple but powerful truth, I started directing my thoughts in more productive ways. And the actions followed quite naturally. No doubt, I've stumbled many times on my journey through life and the music business (and I continue to), but the rewards have been many. And they keep growing every year.

The Bottom Line: *Thoughts are things.* What starts as an intangible concept grows into a reality as a result of mental focus combined with real-life activity. In fact, this is exactly how all songs are created.

So I ask you: What thoughts do you have about your present and future as an independent music person? And what actions are materializing as a result?

The *Guerrilla Music Marketing Handbook* will help you sort out the answers, open your mind to the infinite possibilities around you and motivate you to take the steps necessary to climb higher up the ladder of success with your music.

How to use this book

Many of the chapters in this manual were originally written as separate special reports. While I have arranged them in a sequence that makes sense to me, you don't have to read the segments in any particular order. The same goes for the bonus special reports at the end of the manual.

However, I do suggest that you read Chapter 1, "The Power of Goal Setting: A Step-by-Step Plan for Reaching Your Musical Aspirations Faster," and Chapter 2, "The First 5 Steps to Marketing (and Profiting from) Your Music," first. These chapters give you a good foundation for the information contained in other chapters. Other than that, feel free to examine the chapters and reports that relate to whatever marketing or music career topic you want to focus on at the time.

I'm grateful that you're allowing me to share these ideas with you. I sincerely hope you soak up the tips revealed in these pages and put them to good use. I look forward to one day hearing about your musical achievements.

Much success to you!

-Bob Baker

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Chapter 3

35 Ways to Promote Yourself, Your Band or Your New Release

Despite what you may have heard to the contrary, promoting and marketing your music shouldn't be the dreary task so many music people make it out to be. The pessimists tell us we have to shut down the creative side of our brains and shift into "business" mode. How dull. How boring. No wonder so many folks go running for the hills at the mere mention of having to promote their music.

What follows is a list of creative, low-cost ideas and techniques you can start using right away to market your music. Read these tips. Think about them. Play with them. Have some fun with them. But, most importantly, put them into action ... starting today!

Translate your story into something that's newsworthy

Announcing the release of another new album won't get you very far. Music magazines get dozens of these ho-hum announcements every day. However, the debut release from a Gulf War veteran or a guy who once got punched by Sean Penn might catch the attention of a music editor. Why? Because it has a news hook that makes it stand out.

So what's your news hook? Does your band name or new CD title have a significant meaning? Have any of your members won awards, done brave deeds or accomplished anything noteworthy (they don't have to be music-related)? Do the lyrics to any of your songs tie in with a current event or trend? Always be on the lookout for fresh news hooks surrounding your music and then hammer them home to the media.

Here's a sampling of free press that bands have received in various publications over the years – along with the news hooks they used to get it:

1) The east coast band Too Much Joy received a letter from former Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich letting the members know that the group's tune "Theme Song" had inspired countless of Republican activists to pursue their conservative agenda during the 1994 elections.

Only thing was, members of Too Much Joy never supported Gingrich and didn't consider themselves to be politically right-leaning in any way. The *Aquarian Weekly* plastered its cover with the news item and filled up two full pages inside dealing with the issue.

Have you received a letter from a public figure? Could you write to someone well known and request that they write to you? **Another option:** When a famous author comes to your town to do a book signing ... buy the book, get in line and ask him or her to write a special inscription – such as “The Lipsmackers Rock! -Dr. Ruth.” Make photocopies of the signature and leverage it to get as many plugs in the media as you can.

2) The Texas-based band Rare Seed got a blurb in a local paper regarding its upcoming appearance on a regional music video program. This is a smart ploy. Most music people celebrate when they get the media to cover them. And then stop. Rare Seed band members, on the other hand, used their success with television to lure the print media into also giving them a plug.

Why not use this cross-media technique with radio and Internet media sources, too? Use every achievement as a stepping stone to your next marketing move. If done right, it's a never-ending process.

3) Dr. Frank, who fronts the Bay area band Mr. T Experience, received some press in *Bam* magazine regarding the “Dr.” part of his stage name. It seems Frank was all set to go to graduate school at Harvard when urges to pursue his punk band overcame him.

Do you have an alternate career path you've either put on hold or are doing as a day job? If so, how can you squeeze some media exposure out of it? If the usual music papers and columnists don't nibble, what about trade publications or company newsletters associated with your other line of work?

4) The members of 1,000 Mona Lisas garnered a write-up concerning an incident that had them pulled over in Texas with state troopers searching them and their van for drugs. The band also happened to call its ensuing tour “Got Any Weed?” Now it's your turn ... not to get pulled over, but to take a frustrating situation and turn it into a promotional device.

What awful things have happened to you lately? And how can you turn them into a newsworthy advantage for you and your music?

5) Twelve San Francisco bands got press when they pooled their efforts and produced a calendar. Each month featured a photo of a different act with humorous events that happened to each band on various dates. Could you use this angle for your band?

6) The band Her Majesty the Baby got a blurb written because it was the first band on its indie label to release an album on a new, enhanced CD format. Do you have a unique way of presenting yourself?

7) One hard-core Beatles fan got exposure when he persuaded the mayor of his city to declare December 8 as “John Lennon/Free as a Bird Day.” Could you swing a similar proclamation?

8) A radio station garnered press when it lined up some semi-well-known artists to perform an acoustic concert for charity. What worthy cause could you support?

9) Silverwolf Records got coverage for its The Silverwolf Homeless Project, a CD of songs about the homeless. Does your CD have a noteworthy theme?

10) A rap trio whose members pack a few extra pounds put on a promotional workout at a New York fitness club. The media gathered and got photos and video of the rappers sweating to the sounds of their new single.

Now come up with your own news hooks. And, remember, have fun doing it!

Blurbs, short takes and mentions equal exposure for you

Some people call them *blurbs*. Others call them *short takes* or *brief editorial mentions*. Whatever name you give them, they can add up to extra media exposure for you and your music. Feature stories and record reviews are great – and you should pursue these rich avenues of media coverage regularly. But what most music marketers overlook are the great opportunities that exist with musical gossip columns, scene reports, industry updates, studio news and more.

Every week, thousands of magazines, newspapers, web sites and fanzines around the world need to fill certain editorial sections with short, music-related items of interest. Since they’re not especially prominent, these sections are ignored by bands and record labels. How foolish.

What follows is a list of column blurbs I found while flipping through a few regional music papers. Use these ideas to come up your own list of angles to get regular (and beneficial) editorial mentions.

11) The nostalgic R&B group the Fabulous Boogie Kings received some press over a club appearance in Houston. The blurb made a reference to the outstanding sales of the band’s latest CD. Do you have something of note to celebrate – an achievement that would lend credence to your band’s worth? If so, share it with the press.

12) Personality Crisis received a media mention because the band was planning a special show to celebrate its 500th gig. Any special occasion – no matter how trivial it may seem to you – can be leveraged into a reason for a columnist to give you a plug.

13) A few Texas bands put together a rock show package called the Divas of Rock Tour. Combining your efforts with other bands, record labels or a group of sponsors – and adding a theme – opens the door to more exposure.

14) Shaun Barusch got a few great media plugs when he formed MIA. Bands aren't the only subjects to get mentioned in the press. Consider your label, distribution company, charity, studio – whatever – as a prime candidate for coverage.

Here are some more real-life editorial blurbs:

15) The hard rock band Third Eye got written up after making an appearance at the Milwaukee Metal Festival.

16) Arts organization the Houston Music Council got press when it released the 4th volume of a compilation CD featuring local bands.

17) The publication *Music News* ran a blurb on the Zealots' performance at a regional street festival. The short piece also included the band's hotline number.

18) The group Deadhorse got a write-up regarding its new guitarist.

Now start thinking. Start writing. Start getting exposure!

More creative music marketing ideas

19) Canadian entertainment lawyer Ryan T. Richardson works with a band called Leaderdogs for the Blind, which released an album called *Lemonade*.

Richardson explains: "When the record company went into a state of inaction just after the album release, we decided to push our own singles, one being the title track. Inserted with the flier listing the singles was a small packet of brand-name Lemonade drink mix that cost us the whopping sum of five cents each.

"Because the packages were so compact, there was no additional cost for mailing them. Across the country, radio program directors and DJs apparently fought over who was going to keep the tasty beverage, and the singles ended up charting."

For most bands, this creative marketing ploy would have been enough. But not for the Leaderdogs.

"At one of our summer festival shows, we distributed free homemade Lemonade to the audience in 95-degree weather, as well as chilled cartons of the refreshment that had been donated by a local juice bottler for all of the industry types present," Richardson says. "It worked."

20) The Costa Mesa, CA band Saint Monday set up an in-store appearance at a Virgin Megastore location and gave away hundreds of free cassette samplers in five hours. Each sampler tape had a coupon for a \$2 mail-in rebate that customers could get if they came back and bought the band's full-length CD at the store.

Since Saint Monday is promoting pop music with a fun and sexy image, the members are considering another creative tactic: giving away condoms with an inscription that reads “Saint Monday: Music That Turns You On.”

So what are you doing that’s fresh and different to promote yourself as an artist? Not sure what creative marketing strategy to try next? Try this:

21) Sit down right now with a pen and notebook. Start brainstorming on every possible angle for a creative hook. Consider the name of your band, the title of your new CD, maybe even the subject matter of individual songs. Also think about current events and good causes you feel strongly about.

Ask yourself: “How can I take these details about my music and transform them into a newsworthy and attention-getting story?”

Combine your clout with others to create your own music event

You know the philosophy by now:

Don’t wait around for music marketing opportunities to come to you. Instead, create your destiny by taking matters into your own hands.

Nowhere is this more powerful than with music events you conceive and organize along with other people. To illustrate the point, here are some possible avenues to pursue:

22) Throw a listening party. Find a nightclub or record store that’s supportive of local music. Ask for a date to hold a new music listening party. Then get a group of bands together that have put out new CDs recently.

On the night of the listening party, pick someone to emcee (maybe you) and introduce one band at a time, then play one or two tracks off each band’s CD. At the end of each group’s segment, you could have audience members ask the band questions.

You could also offer free (or cheap) food and drinks and discounted prices to anyone who wanted to buy any of the CDs that night. It would be best to promote this as a safe, quick musical buffet for consumers who want to sample local music without having to hop from one beer-soaked club to another.

I wish more bands used this concept.

23) Present a collaborative, multi-act unplugged show. Sure, you could present an acoustic performance with other musicians at a nightclub or record store. The format works ... but a lot of artists have done the same thing. It might be even more interesting to take a chance and do it at an unexpected venue. *Possibilities:* art galleries, skate shops, hip clothing stores, leather shops, recreation centers, shopping malls, new age retailers, book stores, etc.

Once again, get a number of other acoustic acts on the bill and make sure the manager of the location is committed to actively promoting the event. Come up with a newsworthy theme and – combined with the offbeat location – you might have a nice angle with which to lure the media into covering it.

24) Tie into an already existing event. You don't have to reinvent the wheel to cash in on events. You can always contact the organizers of already established events and ask if you could help them add a musical element. That way, they look good and you get exposure. Think about the many annual events in your region. Which ones would benefit from your talents and creativity?

Hot tip: If you can't formally get connected to an existing event, consider presenting an unofficial party at a nearby location. Many artists and labels do this during major conferences such as South by Southwest.

Sneak into media exposure through the side door

25) New age artist Laurie Z was interviewed once on a syndicated radio show called *Tech Talk* (which is also broadcast on the Internet). The program features people who use modern technology in various fields. Past guests have included Tom Clancy, Kurt Russell and Todd Rungren. Laurie Z was invited to discuss how she's used technology to create her music and market herself.

The main thing to note in this example is that a musical act is getting media exposure on a non-music show – a valuable lesson for us all. How many potential avenues of promotion are you overlooking because you don't see an immediate connection between what various media cover and what you produce?

Here are some possible angles for different genres:

26) A musician could hook up with a psychologist or music therapist to discuss the stress-reduction benefits of mellow jazz music.

27) A traditional blues player who has either lived through or learned a lot about regional music history could pitch himself as an expert on local culture.

28) A punk or metal band member could become an advocate for safe mosh-pit etiquette and offer to enlighten kids and their parents on common-sense advice when attending concerts.

29) A rap singer might be able to shed light on why teenagers join gangs and how to survive on the streets.

30) A country musician could team up with a fitness instructor and espouse the virtues of line dancing as a fun form of exercise.

31) Become a music trivia expert. Do you know way too much about the Beatles? Or Elvis? Or the '50s, '60s or '70s? Or some other musical niche? If so, appoint yourself to be your area's media consultant on the topic.

Bottom line: You no doubt have many media exposure angles you have yet to use to your advantage.

Here are more music marketing tips to consider:

32) Keep in touch with your contacts. Make sure that at least every six weeks your fans and industry contacts get a phone call, post card, e-mail or other new offering from you. Are you staying in touch with these people now? Your goal should be to put your name and musical identity first and foremost in the minds of the people who are in a position to support you. **Tip:** Come up with a schedule that would accomplish more frequent contact with the people who matter most to your career.

33) Keep your ears open for ideas. Listen to what types of things people complain about, and then provide a solution to their problem. For instance, members of the Chicago band Cool Beans heard music fans complaining about all the negative, angst-ridden lyrics in modern rock songs. Since they play upbeat alterna-pop, they started using the phrase "Energetic new rock & roll ... without the angst!" on all their fliers. Doing so positions them as the "alternative" to gloom rock. And they might not have used that approach if they hadn't listened to what people were saying.

34) Spell out your music for potential new customers. New age artist John Huling puts a brief description of his music on the back of his CDs. By doing so, even customers who haven't heard his music can get a quick synopsis of what his style is all about.

Lesson: Don't expect people to automatically know what your music is all about. There is nothing wrong with indie artists putting review quotes and testimonials from happy fans on the back of CD sleeves and cassette J-cards. Just be picky about which ones you use, focusing more on the quotes that spell out the heart of your musical message and the hard-hitting benefits listeners get when they hear it.

35) Make a commitment to do something every day to promote your music. If a day goes by that you don't do at least some small act to promote your music, you're cheating yourself. And the promotional action you take doesn't have to be earth-shattering. Simple actions are effective too.

Ultimate success in music comes about as a result of the small steps you take consistently on a daily basis. Pick something covered in this chapter every day and put it to use. Doing so will earn you more fans, more notoriety and more clout now ... and throughout the year!

High-Impact Promotional Ideas You Should Be Using to Market Your Band or Record Label

This is one of seven special reports you'll get free when you purchase the Guerrilla Music Marketing Handbook

Have you been in a rut lately when trying to come up with new and innovative music marketing ideas? You won't be for long. Read these ideas and get moving. Every day that passes without you actively promoting your music is lost time. So get busy!

College band payoff

The Dirges is a band made up of students attending Pennsylvania State University. The band's three independently released albums have sold a cumulative 10,000 copies in three years.

"Think about it," says guitarist/keyboardist Steve Bodner, "ten thousand people graduate from this college each year and move to places all across the country. We go right along with them."

Are you taking advantage of the college market?

Music promotion on wheels

Organic Records has a specially designed flatbed truck that travels city to city to get exposure for its artists. The acts can perform from the truck or simply give away samplers and promotional items from it at special events.

Can you develop a fresh method of exposing your music to new groups of people?

Sunny skies in the forecast

Myrrh/Sony artist Bryan Duncan released a new album called Blue Skies. In order to make the most of the album title, his label ran radio spots sponsoring weather reports in key regions of the country. Duncan also did radio interviews during which he would read the weather forecast on the air. You can bet there aren't many other artists taking this approach.

Is there anything about your CD title or band name that can be transformed into a creative marketing strategy?

Cover up!

Tired of being denied radio airplay just because stations prefer to pump out overly familiar music to the masses? One solution: Stop fighting and go with the status quo. Musician magazine ran a piece on Australian band the Clouds. The act's CD features a cover of "Wichita Lineman."

"It's a beautiful song," says bassist Patricia Young. "Not only that, it's a lot easier to pick up airplay with familiar material."

Might there be a cover song that you can put your own fresh spin on?

Identify your image

Bands that choose to portray a certain image often attempt to mislead the music-buying public. And these music consumers show their displeasure by staying away from your shows and new CDs in droves. Having an "image" implies something phony – a facade that tries to manipulate the people exposed to it.

Instead of trying to communicate your image, start marketing your "identity." An identity is an honest expression of what your music and personality are all about. I know this may be a nit-picking argument over semantics, since many people use these terms interchangeably. But if you focus on finding your "identity," it forces you to send a more honest message regarding your music.

And that kind of honesty breeds confidence and attracts fans like magnets.

People will remember the most fascinating part of your marketing but not necessarily your band or new release. Of course, this all depends on what the most fascinating aspect is. If you display an eye-catching photo or piece of artwork on your ads or fliers, people may remember the visual image and not your band. If you use a witty headline, they may remember the humor and not your musical message.

Music consumers are first and foremost interested in the benefit they get from the music they buy. So if you want to interest them, relate your marketing pitch directly to their needs. And do it in such a way that your band or new release is the most fascinating part of your message.

For instance, the Tone Casualties label ran an ad in Option magazine that still has me scratching my head. A collage of bizarre artwork takes up half of the ad, while small, "stylish" type that's hard to read is scattered about the other half. I think this ad is promoting several of the label's releases, but I'm not sure. I know that Tone Casualties specializes in unconventional, experimental sounds, but this experimental marketing ploy doesn't help get the message across.

A half-page ad from Hannibal Records, on the other hand, does a nice job of using humor to get its point made. The headline reads, "Did you hear the one about the Cuban

piano player, the Tibetan nun and the Finnish accordionist?” The smaller subhead underneath explains, “It’s no joke: They’ve made three must-have new world music albums for Hannibal.” Each album then has a one-sentence description and that’s it – short, sweet, interesting and effective.

Just like all good music marketing should be!

The Guerrilla Attack. On a recent trip to the library, I checked out Jay Levinson’s book *Guerrilla Marketing Attack*. Like the other books in Levinson’s “Guerrilla” series, this volume is packed with dozens of usable business-building tactics. I’ve taken the liberty of giving four of the concepts from the book a musical slant.

Use eight stamps instead of one

As you know, people are bombarded with mail. Music editors, disc jockeys, managers, distributors – they all receive far too much unsolicited mail. One creative, low-cost way to cut through the clutter is to use far more stamps than anyone else is using. Instead of sending your first-class letter with one 32 cent stamp, why not stick on several stamps that all add up to 32 cents? Who would fail to open a letter with eight stamps on it? You might even write a simple phrase such as “We’re hoping for your stamp of approval” on the outside of the envelope.

Don’t ask your fans to simply sign up on a band mailing list; ask them to become a member of your club

I’m sure you can already see the difference between being added to a list and becoming a member of a special club. Signing up on a list is cold and impersonal. Joining a club is warm and cozy.

Advice: Put together an inexpensive package that might include a membership certificate with the person’s name on it, a fan club card, an autographed photo, free sampler tape, button and any other fun goodies you can find at discount stores. If people join the club while at one of your shows, you can either give them all this cool stuff then or let them know you’ll be mailing a package to them ASAP.

Then make sure and send it within the next few days, and follow up with regular newsletters and updates.

Research has shown that when you give things away to people, they are much more receptive and likely to spend money on you in the near future. The rule here is simple: In order to reap the rewards of your labor on the back end, you have to give something away and keep your customers’ needs foremost in mind on the front end. That’s what effective marketing is all about!

Arrange for positive picketers to demonstrate in front of a nightclub or record store

The basic idea here is to gather a group of your supporters outside of an establishment, carrying signs that praise your band or new release. Each sign should have a different review quote, ringing endorsement or photo.

This marketing tactic is so fresh and unexpected, it just might generate a lot of favorable publicity in the area. You'd be wise to get the blessings of the club or storeowner before proceeding with this one. But with the potential exposure it could generate, you should have no problem finding at least one establishment to actively participate in the mock picket.

Embrace your customers for a lifelong relationship

Most music marketers don't see the ongoing value of a single customer. They sell a new fan a \$12 CD and take pride in making a \$9 to \$10 profit. But the guerrilla music marketer sees it differently.

He or she knows that with proper care and attention, a single new fan can be worth far more over the course of many years. Not only will that fan buy future releases and attend numerous shows, but this person will also tell others about this great band that treats him or her so well.

These new, referred fans will also buy lots of CDs and pay the cover at many live concerts. A single CD sale (with a \$10 profit) has the potential to be worth 10 to 20 times that over several years. That is, if you caress and pamper your fans (figuratively, of course) and show them you really care.

Music marketing and the state of your fans

In this section, let's talk about sizzle. And let's talk about steak. You've most likely heard the old advertising credo "Sell the sizzle, not the steak." It's another way of saying "Push customer benefits, not features." This mantra has been repeated time and time again in marketing circles for decades. But as with all timeless advice, people continue to ignore the wisdom.

So, let's take a test to see how you stack up in this area. Answer these two questions: When it comes to communicating with your fans, what business are you in? And what do you really offer them?

If you answered "I'm in the music business, and I offer them my CDs and live concerts," you're dead wrong. Phrases such as "music," "CDs" and "concerts" are pure features. And features are simply things you technically do or produce in the course of creating your music. Sure, you must focus on these things when you create them.

But they're not what your fans are focusing on when they spend money on your recordings and live shows.

What do fans buy, then? Here's the answer (and write this down in a visible place and remind yourself of it often): The real reason consumers buy music is to experience the emotional and physical "state change" that occurs within them, because of the music you create.

For instance, high-energy music pumps up its followers and gets the adrenaline flowing. New Age music, however, soothes the mind and the body of listeners. Sad love songs remind romantic folks of a similar event in their lives. Ethnic music can help people connect with their roots. Oldies bring back memories and feelings of the good old days. Classical music awes and inspires us.

Regardless of the style or genre, music touches people on both an emotional and physical level. The state of the listener before hearing your music is decidedly different from what it is during the hearing (or watching) of it. State changes add adventure and excitement to our lives – which is exactly why so many people turn to drugs and alcohol to do the same thing for them.

Never forget that. And start asking yourself: What kind of state change does my music inspire in my fans? When you're creating, by all means focus on the music, the CDs and the concerts. But forget all that when it comes to communicating with your fans – and start concentrating on state changes!

So when it comes to sending out marketing messages about your music, what's going to get the best response for you? Talking about your "new CD, now available at your favorite local record store"? Or reminding people of the real reason they're going to buy it? Meaning the emotional and physical payoff they get when they spend a few dollars or more on your band.

In case you didn't know it, you're no longer in the music business. You're now in the "state change" business – especially when it comes to marketing your music.

How to use pain and pleasure to market your music

Let me ask you this question: What are the two major forces that motivate human beings to act? You might be tempted to say things like "more money, better sex (or having any sex), security, respect..."

Yes, those are motivating factors, but let's break them down into the two most basic components. Here they are: Human beings either want to move closer to pleasure or away from pain. That's it. Everything you or any other person does can be broken down into one or both of these categories: getting pleasure or avoiding pain.

Want some examples? Eating helps you avoid hunger pains and at times can lead to enjoying a fine meal (sorry, a Whopper doesn't count). You're inspired to make money

to avoid the pain of not paying your bills and get the pleasure of treating yourself to the things you want. Perhaps you play music in order to get the pleasure of creating music and the recognition that comes with it when you share it with others. Or maybe you play music to avoid the pain that comes with not having an outlet for your creative urges.

Pleasure motivations occur when people aspire to a higher level or to experience one of those feel-good “state changes.” Pain motivations occur when we want to eliminate a current physical or emotional nuisance, or when we want to avoid a potential loss we believe may happen in the near future.

Of these two motivators, pain is the strongest. People tend to grieve over a perceived loss more than a gain. For instance, which would be more intense: Your level of happiness at finding \$100, or your level of frustration at losing \$100? Most people would feel the loss more intensely.

Marketers use both of these factors all the time. As an example, weight loss clinics and diet book publishers have two options when marketing. One, they can concentrate on the pleasure the person will get once they reach that desired lower weight. Or, two, they can remind the person how unhappy they are right now and how that pain can be removed if only they sign up or buy the book. Of the two approaches, the second is the strongest motivator.

So how does this apply to marketing your music? Take a look at the state changes your music causes in your fans. Does it pump them up? Calm them down? Make them feel connected? Nostalgic? Romantic? Inspired? What’s the real payoff your fans get from your music? You should now know what that payoff is.

Now take those qualities and express them in both pleasure-gaining and pain-avoiding terms. Here are some examples:

A high-energy rock band

Pleasure: We’ll get you pumped up and feeling alive and energetic.

Pain: Tired of your mundane nine-to-five work routine? Sick of sissy pop rock when you turn on the radio? We have what you need right here on our CD.

An acoustic pop-folk act

Pleasure: Our songs will soothe your mind with catchy but mellow guitar melodies and make you smile.

Pain: With your fast-paced schedule, the last thing you need is more of that angst-ridden grunge crap you always hear on the radio. Our music is your solution.

An avant-garde jazz trio

Pleasure: Exciting rhythms and invigorating instrumentation await you on our band's CD.

Pain: Sure, you could continue to be lulled to sleep by the dull, predictable sounds of most new bands. Or you could give yourself some much-deserved relief from this simple dreck and treat yourself to our trio of seasoned jazz pros.

A romantic balladeer

Pleasure: Snuggle up with your honey and sway to these timeless songs, guaranteed to supercharge your love life.

Pain: The recent slew of raw sex songs just isn't cutting it anymore. Get the romantic relief you need by listening to my new CD of love songs.

Get the idea? Of course, you can use both pain and pleasure tactics when writing your music marketing materials. Hit people from both angles. It will help drive home the message of your music and give your fans (and potential fans) one good reason after another to give your musical act a try... and keep coming back for more and more of the pleasure-gaining and pain-avoiding goodies you have waiting for them.

Doing it yourself – at least at first – is better

According to John Huling, a New Age artist from Arizona, the personal approach is best. "If you see a store selling the type of music you play, immediately give the owner a copy of your album," he says. "Return a few days later to see if they liked it. If their response is positive, ask them to stock it."

Eventually, you'll get your release into enough stores and distributors will then be interested in taking on your line of recordings – thereby, saving you a lot of time and effort dealing with so many different retailers. But in the meantime, as Huling points out, "the money from a lot of little stores does add up."

Huling also explains that the experience of releasing CDs on his own Novox record label greatly prepared him for being approached by major record companies. "I was offered a dollar per unit from one major label," he recalls. "There was no way I'd do that. But if I had not released my own albums and been successful as an independent artist, then those same offers would have sounded good." As seen in Disc Makers' *Fast Forward* newsletter, (800) 468-9353.

Demo strategies that set your music apart

Whether you want to attract a publisher, record label, music magazine or radio station, you need to find ways to make your recorded submissions stand out. Here are two ideas few others are using:

1) A few years ago, as my staff and I were going through band submissions to our annual Regional Music Showcase, we came across a short tape that featured snippets of about eight songs from one band. Each song faded out after about 30 seconds, and after a two-second pause, the next song began. We got a quick earful of this group's music without having to agonize through fast forwarding the tape.

I know, CDs allow you to bounce around from track to track at will, but I still think this sampling presentation can be an effective one. You'll get more bang for your buck if you make the recipient aware of the timesaving benefits of this format.

Include a short letter that states something like: "You're busy. You haven't got time to listen to every note of every song that comes across your desk. That's why we've made it easy for you to enjoy a three-minute sampling of our six best songs. That's all it takes. Three minutes. And you're done. If you like what you hear, contact us for our full-length CD ..."

I think if more bands used this approach, they'd see a better response to unsolicited mailings.

2) This second demo tape submission technique could work well along with the first one or by itself. It involves recording a personalized voice message at the beginning of each tape you send. Let's say you get a batch of short tapes for the purpose of taking the above six-song sampler approach. Don't start the first song until 30 seconds into the tape. Use the first 30 seconds to record your voice greeting the specific person it's meant for.

The tape should be delivered with a note saying: "A personal message just for you is recorded on the first 30 seconds of this tape. I have something to say that I think you'll want to hear."

Once the person's curiosity is teased and he/she pops in the tape, your recorded message might say: "Hi, Pat. This is Fred from the band Green Slime. I really enjoy your columns in the Daily Music Rag, especially the piece you did on (insert any detailed reference, as long as it's genuine). I know you're busy and are probably sick of opening mail, so I thought I'd give you a change of pace with this voice cover letter. The rest of this tape contains... (here you can borrow from the wording used for the sampler above)."

The reason these two tactics work is because they meet the two most important criteria for marketing music:

- 1) They keep the recipient's limited time foremost in mind, and
- 2) They are truly different from the norm.

Street smarts

Here's a good example of a fresh angle for a compilation CD. Clay Dog Records put out *Street Dreams*, a collection of music from some of Chicago's more visible street musicians – recorded live at the corners and subway stops they frequent. Lesson: If you put together a compilation, make sure there's a logical and appealing thread that holds it all together. "Here's a bunch of cool bands" won't cut it. But a lot of cool music centered around a common theme might sell.

The same thing goes for promoting just one band. Always keep your image consistent. When people see your fliers, post cards, CD artwork, business cards, etc. they should know (without a doubt) that it's all coming from the same band. You can do this by keeping your logo, typefaces and tone of the wording consistent. This might seem bland and repetitious to the person designing the pieces. But always changing the look and feel of your marketing will only confuse people.

And what would you rather have: Lots of people who know exactly what your band is, or a lonely portfolio of varied press kits and artwork?

This is a demo version of the *Guerrilla Music Marketing Handbook* that contains the Table of Contents, Introduction, Chapter 3 and a bonus special report.

Want to find out more about the entire book?

Head to www.bob-baker.com/af/bard.html

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About the Author

“Bob’s information is by far the most honest and caring presentation I have come across in my 20-plus years in the business. His material is easy to grasp, factual and painfully realistic. You would be foolish to prefer anyone else on this subject.”

*-Raleigh Pinsky, author of You Can Hype Anything
and 101 Ways to Promote Yourself*

“I really appreciate your tips on how to publicize and promote my band. Yours are among the best suggestions for musicians I’ve ever seen – specific, realistic, inexpensive, clear, creative and practical.”

-Laura Mills, Saint Monday, Los Angeles

Bob Baker is a musician, author and former music magazine publisher who provides inspiration and low-cost marketing ideas to songwriters, musicians and bands on a budget

His other resources include:

Poor Richard’s Branding Yourself Online: How to Use the Internet to Become a Celebrity or Expert in Your Field

The Online Music PR Hot List: 89 places to submit press releases, get reviewed, uncover PR connections and promote your music on the Internet

Ignite Your Creative Passion: 104 Insights and Ideas to Help You Prosper as a Musician, Artist, Writer, Actor and More

Check out Bob’s three web sites:

The Buzz Factor

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